

# THE CONTINUING EDUCATION COORDINATOR'S ***BULLETIN***

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INFORMATION AND IDEAS FROM THE INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE CLINICAL SUPPORT CENTER  
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## ACLS COURSES

*In this issue of The Bulletin, we offer some observations and suggestions about standardized national courses like Advanced Cardiac Life Support and similar activities. You may find the points below helpful when you are planning one of these courses. Although we have used ACLS as the example in this discussion, the information applies equally to Neonatal Resuscitation, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics, Advanced Trauma Life Support, and other similar courses.*

- Be precise when you select a name for your course. Use the exact name designated by the American Heart Association (AHA) or other national sponsor; don't take liberties by making slight modifications. Also, make certain that you identify in the title whether these are "Provider" or "Instructor" courses. For example, entitle your course "Advanced Cardiac Life Support — Provider Course."
- New patient management guidelines for the ACLS Course were published in the 1992 issue of *The Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA)*. These should have been introduced into the curricula of your ACLS Courses by now. These changes did not necessarily mean that the course agenda had to change, just the content.
- The AHA has recently introduced changes in the format for teaching ACLS. The revised course relies more heavily on case studies. If we are still sponsoring a course with you that you are teaching under the "old" format, we can continue this sponsorship agreement until it expires. If you are revising your course to use the new format under an existing sponsorship agreement, please let us know right away, since this substantially changes the agenda and, probably, the hours of credit. We can make the changeover easily.
- There have frequently been questions about the distinction between earning a **certificate of successful completion** for an ACLS course and earning **continuing education credits** for the same activity. These are independent of one another. When participants attend the lectures and/or teaching stations during a course, they may be awarded CE credit for the time spent learning (regardless of whether or not they pass the course examination and become certified). However, if the participants only attend testing stations and/or take the written post-course examination to demonstrate proficiency and knowledge, but attend no learning sessions, no CE credit will be awarded (even though they may pass the

course and become certified). When submitting attendance lists to the Clinical Support Center, please be sure to clearly indicate the number of hours each participant spent in learning activities. CSC then awards continuing education certificates. Certification of Completion of the course is awarded by the AHA or other appropriate national organization.

- The planning committee should carefully consider whether skills stations are designed to be **learning** experiences, or are to be used for **testing** purposes. Only stations designated as teaching or learning stations are awarded continuing education credit. If a station serves both purposes, estimate the portion of the time spent there that would qualify as continuing education and include that in your sponsorship proposal.
- When you expect a mixed audience to attend, consider whether some participants may want to do some advanced preparation (lectures, self-study, etc.) so that they will be more likely to succeed in the course.
- Be sure to mail or distribute the texts and other written course materials well in advance so that everyone has plenty of time to study them and prepare for the course.
- Announcements serve just as many valuable purposes for ACLS courses as they do for other types of continuing education activities. Simply because these are "standardized courses" doesn't mean that participants don't need or want to know who the faculty are and their qualifications, the objectives, the intended target audience, precourse requirements, and so on.

- Some have organized these courses to occur in small increments over a few weeks' time, for example a two-hour segment every Monday night for six weeks. Our experience has been that some participants drop out due to conflicts that arise. We encourage you to consider this when contemplating extended courses.

## THE BOTTOM LINE . . .

While ACLS and other "standardized" national courses have a prescribed curriculum, there is room for flexibility and innovation. There are many ways in which you can tailor these courses to the needs and learning styles of your facility's providers. The Clinical Support Center sponsors more of these courses than any other type of activity; given our extensive experience with them, we are pleased to offer advice or feedback as you embark on plans to offer one at your service unit. Please feel free to ask for our help.

If you are not on the mailing list for this *Bulletin* or wish to receive any back issues, please call us at 602-640-2140 or write to:

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